

Candidates, understand thy budget

It's a shame many candidates for Crested Butte town council and mayor failed to show up for the four-hour work session on the 1986 budget Tuesday. They could have seen how much improvement Town Manager Bill Crank and Finance Director Charlotte Fletcher had made to the accounting systems. They could have understood why the town keeps 17 checkbooks. They could have proven they have the stamina to sit through long meetings.

More importantly, they could have understood the strengths and weaknesses of the budget they will have to work with should they be

elected. We agree with Crank that the budget is the single most important council action each year. Crank announced he will not go through the detailed explanation again. He's right to refuse; candidates should have been there.

Candidates should be able to answer questions such as: Why is the SID fund short? Why is the capital budget tight? Which line items are discretionary? What future can be projected for the general fund?

This is no small potatoes. The total spent in 1984 was almost a million bucks.

Candidates are apt to make promises during cam-

paigns that money will be expended on their constituents' pet projects. But once elected, those officials tend to see that budget realities force "delays" in those expenditures.

Is it realistic to speak of arts centers, town centers, street paving, hospital contributions, or any other new expenditure in 1986?

The current situation initially appears to us to allow at least one new spending item, but which one it should be is hard to say. Those who understand the budget will likely have more sway when it comes time to determine priorities.

--Gary Sprung